United Nations A/72/174

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 July 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Item 20 of the provisional agenda*
Sustainable development

Sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/196 on sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America, provides an update since the issuance of the previous report on the subject (A/70/215) on the ongoing efforts of Central American States to implement programmes to promote sustainable development and sustainable tourism.

* A/72/150.

17-12260 (E) 020817

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 70/196 on sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-second session a report on the implementation of the resolution. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), as the specialized agency of the United Nations vested with a central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, assumed the lead role in preparing the present report.

2. The report provides an update since the issuance of the previous report on the subject (A/70/215) on the ongoing efforts of Central American countries to implement programmes to promote sustainable tourism and sustainable development. The report is based on the responses received from, inter alia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama to the request for updates, made by UNWTO in early 2017 through a follow-up survey on General Assembly resolution 70/196, for the purpose of monitoring the implementation of the resolution.

3. The report reflects ongoing research conducted by UNWTO since 2016 to examine the extent to which sustainable consumption and production patterns are integrated into national tourism planning. The research involves analysis of the results of a global survey on tourism planning and an extensive review of the tourism policies of UNWTO member States, with a particular focus on sustainable consumption and production issues.[1]

II. Brief background on sustainability developments of relevance for the Central American region

4. It has been acknowledged that the sustainable tourism sector is capable of making significant contributions to the three dimensions of sustainable development owing to its complex linkages with other sectors; moreover, the growth of the sector, combined with its increased diversification, makes it an agent of sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which constitute an ambitious conceptual and political road map for the years ahead, reflect that acknowledgment.

5. Tourism is part of this important road map. Three of the Sustainable Development Goals, in fact, contain specific references to it, namely: Goal 8, on sustainable economic growth and decent employment; Goal 12, on sustainable consumption and production; and Goal 14, on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans. Nevertheless, given the sheer size and the cross-cutting nature of the sector, tourism has the potential to contribute, directly and indirectly, to the achievement of all 17 Goals.

6. The 2030 Agenda calls for sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, the protection of the environment, productive employment, innovation, responsible consumption and production, gender equality, reduced inequality and ending poverty in all its forms, all of which are key challenges to be addressed in

[1] As at July 2017, a total of 73 responses had been received from national tourism authorities, mainly from Europe (26 countries; 36 per cent), followed by Africa (18 countries; 25 per cent) and the Americas (15 countries; 21 per cent). Seventy-one national tourism policies were accessed through official websites or obtained through UNWTO national focal points and have been analysed, including 20 policies from Africa (28 per cent), 19 from the Americas (27 per cent) and 14 from Europe (20 per cent).

order to achieve long-term sustainable development for the Latin American region where, despite the considerable success achieved with regard to poverty reduction, 168 million people (28 per cent of the population) live in poverty.[2]

7. By its resolution 70/193, the General Assembly decided to proclaim 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. In the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the aim of the International Year is to raise awareness of the contribution of sustainable tourism to development among decision makers and the public, while mobilizing all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change. A prominent message of the campaign is the need to measure the impact of tourism at destinations, which is a crucial element for the evidence-driven development of tourism that is based on a participatory approach, inclusiveness and timely monitoring, and that encompasses a holistic approach towards sustainability.

8. The Sustainable Tourism Programme of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, launched in November 2014, advances the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of the tourism sector by serving as a collaborative platform to bring together and scale up initiatives and partnerships to accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production. The Programme is one of the six initial programmes under the Framework, which was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Its main goal is to decouple tourism growth from the increased use of natural resources and it focuses on four areas of work: (a) integrating sustainable consumption and production into tourism-related policies and frameworks; (b) promoting collaboration among stakeholders for the improvement of the performance of the tourism sector, including the application of monitoring frameworks; (c) fostering the application of guidelines, tools and technical solutions to mainstream sustainable consumption and production for destinations, enterprises and tourists; and (d) enhancing sustainable tourism, investment and financing. In Central America, actors such as the Ministry of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, the National Council for Sustainable Development of Honduras, the National Cleaner Production Centre of Nicaragua and the Ministry of Environment of Panama are involved in the Programme.

9. The Paris Agreement, a global landmark agreement on action to address climate change, was adopted at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris in December 2015. As a legally binding and universal instrument, with the central goal of keeping the increase in long-term global warming to well below 2°C, it represents another major achievement for international diplomacy, in which the shift to a bottom-up, pledge-based system for action on climate change is built. The Central American States face particular challenges in that regard as a result of inequalities and disparities in their income distribution and the need to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions made by their highest income sectors, as well as in terms of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

10. The Paris Agreement includes the obligation for all Parties to pursue efforts to achieve nationally determined contributions and to strengthen those efforts in the years ahead, including through regular reporting on greenhouse gas emissions and implementation measures. It also includes the obligation for developed countries to support the efforts of developing countries in that regard. A global stocktaking exercise will be undertaken every five years in order to monitor collective progress

[2] *Horizons 2030: Equality at the Centre of Sustainable Development*. (United Nations publication, Sales No. 16.II.G.11), page 47.

towards achieving the objectives of the Agreement and to guide further actions by parties.

11. The thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Cancun, Mexico, from 2 to 17 December 2016. The meeting adopted the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-Being, in which, among other things, it recognized that tourism could contribute directly to the conservation of sensitive areas and habitats through a variety of activities and by raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity. It also recognized that, if well managed, tourism had the potential to be an enabling agent of change. Such recognition is particularly important for the Central American region, which has very rich biodiversity, a variety of climates and ecosystems and is home to the Meso-American Biological Corridor.

A. Sustainable tourism in Central America

12. International tourism plays a major role in the development of the Central American region and has grown significantly in recent years. In 2016, Central America received almost 11 million international tourists, who generated $11.4 billion in revenues, up from 4.3 million visitors and revenues of $3 billion in 2000. In 2016, Costa Rica led the trend with a double digit growth in arrivals (+10 per cent), followed by Guatemala (+8 per cent), Nicaragua (+5 per cent up to September 2016) and Honduras (+4 per cent up to November 2016). As a result, overall arrivals to Central America grew at a rate of 6 per cent in 2016, well above the global average of 3.9 per cent.

13. According to *Tourism Towards 2030/Global Overview*,[3] the number of international tourist arrivals for the Central American region is expected to increase from 7.9 million in 2010 to 22 million by 2030. This shows that the region has great potential to continue to enhance the development of tourism, becoming an instrument of social inclusion that generates decent jobs and contributes to the improvement of the quality of life of the population, within a framework of sustainability.

B. Frameworks, policies and legislation for sustainable tourism development

14. National tourism planning in Central America is in line with a globally observed trend for a long-term planning approach. On the basis of the national tourism policies of six Central American States analysed (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) in the context of UNWTO research on tourism policies, the planning horizon in the region is 12 years, slightly above the global average of 10 years (based on an analysis of 71 countries).

15. Since 2015, five of the six respondents to the follow-up survey (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama) have established new national policies, tourism plans, strategies, guidelines and/or programmes for the promotion and development of sustainable tourism. In the same period, Central American countries have modified their existing legislative or policy frameworks to support sustainable tourism development, mainly in the areas of biodiversity protection (six countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama),

[3] World Tourism Organization, *Tourism Towards 2030/Global Overview — Advance edition presented at UNWTO 19th General Assembly — 10 October 2011* (Madrid, 2011).

indigenous and/or community development (five countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama), climate change (four countries: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama) and natural resource management (four countries: Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama). The shared overall goal of the policies is to limit the impact of tourism on the environment and better prepare the sector for efficient management of cultural and natural resources.

16. Sustainable tourism is the cornerstone of the national development plan of Costa Rica for the period 2015-2018, and initiatives, such as the certification for sustainable tourism programme, are designed to advance the sustainability of the sector. To support the development of sustainable tourism, Costa Rica has amended legislation and policies in the areas of biodiversity, climate change and indigenous community development. The Framework Convention to Promote an Open State of the Republic of Costa Rica has also been signed by the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the Government and the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, in order to make progress at the national level on issues of transparency, citizen participation and the fight against corruption.

17. El Salvador has launched its five-year tourism plan for the period 2014-2019 for the promotion and development of sustainable tourism and has focused mainly on ecotourism, community tourism projects in indigenous areas and the establishment of Los Cobanos as a sustainable tourism area. El Salvador is also involved in projects to incorporate biodiversity into tourism activities and tourism projects in indigenous communities, and also participated in the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

18. Guatemala has launched a master plan for sustainable tourism for the period 2015-2025 as the main planning tool for the country's tourism sector. The plan was upgraded to a public policy in 2016. In addition, the growth of the tourism sector is featured as a priority goal in the General Government Policy 2016-2020, announced in 2016. Other major policies initiated by Guatemala that address the tourism sector include the policy on visitor activity in protected areas 2015-2025 and the national development plan, "K´atun, our Guatemala 2032".

19. During the period 2015-2016, tourism policy development in Honduras focused mainly on biodiversity protection and natural resource management. The country introduced legislation on the creation of biological corridors and changes in the administrative procedures for evaluating environmental impact (Agreement No. 0632-2015 on the regulation of biological corridors).

20. Nicaragua is in the process of updating its national tourism strategy. In addition, the country has implemented pilot initiatives in collaboration with the Sustainable Destinations Alliance for the Americas. Nicaragua has also been participating in the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean through the Association of Caribbean States, and has implemented a programme of tourism bonds for environmental sustainability. In addition, its Law No. 690 (Law for the development of coastal zones) was reformed to include new initiatives for tourism investment in protected areas, and a new law, Law No. 848 on national heritage declaration — Corn Island — was introduced.

21. Policy initiatives implemented by Panama during the period 2015-2016 include an action plan for the development of green tourism in protected areas for the period 2016-2026, which is aimed at fostering sustainable tourism in the country; developing sustainability indicators for tourism areas and destinations; establishing a joint group to respond to emergency situations; and establishing a national climate change committee to engage with government institutions.

Poverty reduction

22. Countries usually address poverty through initiatives aimed at fostering the development of local communities and programmes focusing on better engagement of disadvantaged communities in the tourism sector.

23. The Government of Costa Rica has developed a 2015 national strategy for poverty reduction, known as the "Bridge to development", as part of its national development plan. The strategy contains actions for poverty eradication that require inter-institutional coordination and provides for the use of a series of technical tools to develop a more effective response to poverty.

24. El Salvador has undertaken a study on incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals into the development of sustainable tourism as a strategy for reducing poverty in the country and has developed tourism projects for youth and the Maya population in order to improve their incomes and living conditions.

25. Guatemala has undertaken specific programmes, such as the Chixoy compensation policy, Mundo Maya, Carmelita Mirador and Caribe Maya, which serve to support community tourism ventures by providing specialized training to strengthen their capacity to attract tourists, training plans for community tourism guides and support for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, all of which will promote development in protected areas.

26. Honduras has taken measures to promote the inclusion of local communities in tourism sustainability programmes such as the Central American Integrated System of Quality and Sustainability as well as the Communities and Educational Centres chapter of the Honduras Ecological Blue Flag programme.

27. Initiatives by Panama on this front have focused on providing support to micro- and small tourist enterprises through the development of an agreement between the Panama Tourism Authority and the Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Authority to support tourist activities.

Women, youth and local empowerment

28. Three of four respondents to the global survey from the region (Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras) considered gender equality to be a highly important[4] issue in their national tourism policies. There was also consensus on the importance of including local communities in tourism planning since all four respondents (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Panama) also considered that issue to be highly important.

29. The Department of Tourism Development of the Costa Rica Tourism Board has worked to promote and support initiatives and projects that foster the local development of communities and to improve the management and competitiveness of the different actors involved in the tourism industry, including through a training and advisory programme, a rural and community-based rural tourism programme, a support programme for tourism-related micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and a training programme in Costa Rican gastronomy.

30. In El Salvador, tourism initiatives, such as the Mayan community tourism project, have been developed to further youth empowerment and the promotion of tourism in indigenous communities.

[4] On a five-point scale (0 — Not aware, 1 — Not at all important, 2 — Slightly important, 3 — Moderately important, 4 — Very important, 5 — Extremely important). Highly important indicates scale points 4 or 5 in the global survey.

31. The Government of Guatemala has planned, through the General Government Policy 2016-2020, to progressively increase the proportion of women in non-agricultural employment, using training programmes for young people on tourism culture issues, an internationalization programme for companies whose owners are women; and the strengthening of community tourism with an emphasis on communities identified as having social vulnerability and tourism potential.

32. Honduras has taken measures to improve the involvement of communities through its Ecological Blue Flags programme.

33. Nicaragua has developed strategic guidelines for tourism, which have a fundamental focus on the human being and contain an inclusive framework for tourism development. In addition, the national plan for the development of sustainable tourism integrates gender perspectives into its framework.

34. Panama has developed touristic routes and training programmes with the participation of indigenous communities. In addition, in a joint technical cooperation activity with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, officials from seven institutions have been trained to strengthen projects in the indigenous area of the Chagres region as part of the One Village One Product movement. The aim of the movement is to contribute to local development and the elimination of poverty by training local human capital and fostering leadership skills that can serve to improve community capacity.

Efficiency in the use of resources

35. At the global level, 67 per cent of the respondents to the global survey on rated efficiency in the use of resources as highly important[5] for tourism planning at the national level. All four respondents from the Central American region indicated that it was a highly important element in their national tourism planning. The focus given to various aspects of sustainable consumption and production by individual countries in their planning processes during the 2015-2016 period pointed to a growing awareness of the need to integrate sustainable consumption and production principles into the tourism sector.

36. Costa Rica has developed a national plan for sustainable and healthy gastronomy, which serves as a public-private alliance for the development of Costa Rican gastronomy and is part of a national model of sustainable development. The aims of the plan include contributing to carbon neutrality and the conservation of biodiversity, which in turn contributes to the integration of sustainable consumption and production into tourism planning.

37. Representatives of the Secretariat of Planning of the Presidency, and the Ministry of International Relations of El Salvador regularly participate in meetings with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to incorporate sustainable consumption and production into the operational tourism plans.

38. Guatemala has implemented a long-term sustainability and quality system in an effort to improve the standards of quality and sustainability in the local tourism industry and to make the country more competitive through continued compliance with high-quality standards. Guatemala has also proposed a regulation for controlling emissions from motor vehicles. In the municipality of San Pedro La Laguna, municipal agreement No. 111-2016 prohibits the use, sale and distribution of plastic bags, polystyrene, straws and derivatives. In addition, the Pro-forest Law is being implemented as a strategic tool for sustainable forest management. Moreover, the General Government Policy 2016-2020 focuses on the

[5] 4 and 5 on a 5-point scale (1 — not at all important, 5 — extremely important).

maintenance of forest coverage in the national territory. The share of renewable energy in the energy matrix has been increased by 5 per cent, and a law on water management (Ley de Aguas) has been introduced with a view to increasing the country's resilience and adaptation to climate change.

39. Honduras has taken measures to strengthen good environmental practices through the promotion of the Honduras chapter of the Central American Integrated System of Quality and Sustainability programme, and voluntary agreements on cleaner production.

40. The Nicaraguan Tourism Institute has continued to participate in the National Cabinet of Production, Industry and Commerce. Within the framework of the model of dialogue, alliances and consensus promoted by the Government, the Institute has been working in a participatory manner, with all stakeholders of the sector, on tourism development.

41. In its action plan for the development of green tourism in protected areas for the period 2016-2026, which defines specific actions to be executed in Panama as a matter of priority, one of the specific actions, under the thematic area on sustainable infrastructure, as to design and implement guidelines that promote the establishment of sustainable tourism infrastructure inside and outside of protected areas, in particular those incorporating good practices for the management of solid waste, water-saving and energy efficiency.

Disaster response and resilience

42. As at May 2017, 31 national-level documents related to emergency planning available on the PreventionWeb platform of United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction have been reviewed as part of the UNWTO research on national-level emergency planning. The documents include policies, strategies or frameworks that focus on emergency, crisis or disaster management from Asia and the Pacific (39 per cent), Latin America (16 per cent) and Western Europe and other countries (16 per cent).

43. Five of the Central American respondents to the follow-up survey (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) maintained that they have a national emergency plan dealing with the preparation for, response to and recovery from natural and man-made disasters.

44. Of the five countries that reported having a national emergency plan, four (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) have integrated tourism into those plans. In comparison, preliminary results from the review exercise of national emergency planning documents showed that tourism was present in 53 per cent of the 31 national emergency planning documents reviewed.

45. In terms of national emergency planning, the National Risk Prevention and Emergency Management Commission of Costa Rica is the institution responsible for managing the response to emergency events for all people, regions and sectors in the country. The Commission also prepared elements in the national development plan of Costa Rica for the period 2015-2018 on subjects such as risk management. When an emergency occurs in which several sectors are involved, the Commission convenes meetings with emergency representatives from each relevant institution and always consults the Costa Rica Tourism Board in order to exchange information and be informed of the impact of the emergency on business or tourism infrastructure.

46. In Guatemala, tourism destinations are covered under the plans of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction. Moreover, in addition to the country's national

tourist assistance programme, Guatemala has specific arrangements for tourists in emergency situations.

47. The Honduran Institute of Tourism is an integral part of the country's national risk management system. It is protected by pertinent legislation and actively participates in committees on prevention and early warning.

48. The Nicaraguan Tourism Institute is part of the country's national system for disaster prevention, mitigation and attention and is also actively involved at the local level in the departmental committees for disaster prevention, mitigation and response and in the municipal committees for disaster prevention, mitigation and response.

49. In Panama, the Panama Tourism Authority is a member of a joint task force on security and tourism, coordinated by the national civil protection system, which is responsible for ensuring and guaranteeing the safety of all the people who use the beaches, rivers, trails or other tourist sites, as well as the safety of all public or private activity carried out in the country. The Panama Tourism Authority agrees that more activities or initiatives could be envisaged on that front.

III. National priorities

50. The three priority areas for the Central American region in terms of sustainability are the protection of ecologically sensitive areas and natural heritage; tourism capacity-building (human capital and small and medium-sized enterprises); and the sustainable and inclusive development of communities. The priorities indicate the importance given to the responsible consumption of natural resources by the tourism sector in the region. Moreover, the visions of Member States of the Central American region are well aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the objective of ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic, environmental and social development. By being sensitive to the priorities of the Central American States, specialized agencies of the United Nations system, as well as regional and international institutions, can accelerate the development of sustainable tourism and sustainable development in Central America, while strengthening their contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

IV. Overview of regional initiatives on sustainable tourism and sustainable development

51. Member States in Central America have been involved in implementing projects to promote sustainable tourism in the areas of rural tourism (five countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama); tourism in colonial cities (four countries: Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama): and ecotourism (three countries: Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua).

52. At the regional level, through the Central American Tourism Integration Secretariat and its regional member States, various programmes of the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development in Central America 2014-2018 have been implemented, in cross-cutting areas such as biodiversity protection, culture and heritage preservation, climate change, indigenous and community development, sustainable consumption and production, and safety and security.

53. Under the umbrella of the Sustainable Destinations Alliance for the Americas, projects are carried out with the objective of increasing tourism destination competitiveness in the Central American region by promoting sustainable

destination management. The Alliance plans to have a positive impact on the lives of residents in Central America by strengthening the region's competitiveness in the global marketplace, protecting both land and marine resources, implementing sustainability practices, improving the management of locally based tourism and maximizing the benefits of tourism for locals.

54. El Salvador is currently involved in the implementation of the Mayan Community Tourism Project in the countries that make up the Mundo Maya (Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico). The project has two components: a regional project portfolio of community-based cultural tourism and the preparation of business plans for flagship projects; and a strategy for the international promotion of tourism based on Mayan culture. The objectives of the technical cooperation are to develop flagship projects on community tourism in the five countries with a Mayan population and archaeological sites or natural sites of interest, as an alternative to help to improve the income and living conditions of the Mayan population; and to use lessons learned from the projects to create a dialogue with tourism authorities, which enables, in the long run, the extension of such an approach at the national level.

55. At the regional level, Central American countries reported that they had introduced measures to promote national and subnational cooperation on sustainability issues by sharing experiences on subjects such as sustainable tourism and sustainable development (six countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama); biodiversity protection (five countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama); and indigenous and/or community development (four countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama).

56. The Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development in Central America 2014-2018 shows that there has been an increase in the competitiveness of tourism enterprises in response to new market trends. According to Costa Rica, this is due to an increase in the number of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in the region, including in regional and national quality and sustainability systems.

57. Guatemala participates in the Tourism Promotion Agency of Central America, to exchange experiences in that area, and works with World Wide Fund for Nature and Mundo Maya on community tourism projects. The country is also part of the Association of Caribbean States, which promotes tourism in the greater Caribbean area, and is a member of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, which is engaged in the financing of environmentally friendly projects. In addition, Guatemala works with UNDP, through integrated marine and coastal area management activities, to promote ecotourism as a tool for financial sustainability for protected areas.

58. Honduras works with the Secretariat of Central American Tourism Integration to share experiences in the field of sustainable tourism. The Central American Tourism Council and the Central American Environment and Development Committee are entities within the Secretariat of Central American Tourism Integration that support project implementation and regional cooperation in the aforementioned topics.

59. In Nicaragua, over the past year and a half, international and national congresses and forums have been organized, with the aim of promoting the exchange of experiences and capacity-building on themes relevant to the development of the tourism sector. At the local level, technical institutional support is provided for the participatory planning processes in the sector. In addition, Nicaragua has developed an agritourism farms programme to carry out actions that foster tourism development in rural areas. The programme also contributes to

business diversification and increases in income by strengthening the management of agritourism farms as products of rural tourism within a strategy of climate-smart agriculture and good rural practices in tourism. The aim of the so-called "colonial and volcanoes route" is to promote the development of rural and sustainable community tourism around the volcanic natural reserves and coastal areas of the Pacific region of Nicaragua (departments of Chinandega, León, Managua, Masaya, Granada and Rivas), and the development of tourism-related micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and to support local economic development.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

60. Central American countries have continued to support sustainable tourism development, including the adoption of new legislation and policies; promote poverty alleviation through tourism; enhance the protection of biodiversity and cultural heritage; and enhance community development. Furthermore, national strategies for disaster prevention in many of the Central American States engage the tourism sector in efforts to facilitate the use of monitoring and control mechanisms that will serve to ensure disaster preparedness at destinations.

61. Tourism, if well managed and monitored, has the potential to contribute directly or indirectly to development and growth and, consequently, to the achievement of the global development agenda and all of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is therefore crucial to precisely define the role tourism should play in the sustainable development agenda of the Central American region, up to and beyond 2030.

62. Integrating sustainable consumption and production patterns in the tourism sector in Central America, and therefore advancing the 2030 Agenda in the region, requires among other things, the identification and adoption of tourism planning approaches aimed at improving the resource efficiency of tourism stakeholders. For example, the circular economy approach — which promotes business models based on renewable resources, longer and diverse product life cycles, shared consumption and interconnected value chains — can play a significant role in designing and improving resource management systems, not only in the tourism sector, but also for the sustainable development of destinations.

63. Governments and other stakeholders of the region are invited to join the Sustainable Tourism Programme, the aim of which is to promote innovation and circular thinking to accelerate resource efficiency in the tourism value chain. The Sustainable Tourism Programme is jointly led by UNWTO and the Governments of France, Morocco and the Republic of Korea and implemented in collaboration with the Secretariat of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns within the United Nations Environment Programme. Over 120 proactive organizations (including Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia) are currently members of the Programme.

64. The development of sustainable tourism in the region will benefit from being driven by an evidence-based approach, which focuses on the systematic and timely measurement of the economic, environmental and social impact of tourism in destinations, and the effective utilization of the generated information in designing informed policy decisions at the national, regional and local levels.

65. **The importance of adequately measuring the sociocultural and environmental impacts of tourism is emphasized, as well as the recommendation to fill the present data gap in this area by taking advantage of the emergence of non-traditional solutions and sources of data, with an overarching goal of advancing the national sustainable development agenda beyond the tourism sector.**

66. **Governments and other stakeholders of the region are invited to join the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories[6] to promote socially, economically and environmentally sustainable tourism, and to support the practice of informed policymaking around the world, mainly through the identification and dissemination of best practices and enhanced awareness of and capacity-building for sustainability among tourism stakeholders.**

67. **The tourism sector in Central America is encouraged to be part of the coordination, knowledge-sharing and communication mechanisms for security and emergency management at national and regional levels, and to collectively promote an evidence-based approach to develop measures for safe, secure and seamless travel, which will enable government agencies in the region to make relevant, informed and coordinated decisions in areas such as visa facilitation.**

68. **Continuous participatory processes involving all stakeholders — from the public sector, private sector, civil society or local communities — across all levels, through innovative tools, such as participatory budgets, are strongly encouraged, thereby ensuring the long-term participation of local communities in the sustainable development of destinations.**

[6] See http://insto.unwto.org.